

Proposed Bill 800
An Act Restoring Commuter Rail Service from Waterbury to Hartford

Testimony by:

Jim Boucher,
Member, Court of Common Council
Hartford, CT

I am speaking to you as a member of the Court of Common Council of the City of Hartford to express our opposition to Bill 800. The City stands firmly behind the New Britain Hartford Busway project, as evidenced by the Council resolution passed by the Court of Common Council and the letter sent by Mayor Segarra to Governor Malloy (both of which are attached to my testimony.)

This project has been in the planning process for more than 10 years and the City has been involved every step of the way. The busway is an integral part of many programs underway in the City: our neighborhoods have oriented their neighborhood plans to capitalize upon the opportunities for revitalization offered by busway stations. Our One City One Plan, adopted a year ago, recognizes the busway as an essential element of an improved transportation system for the City. Our planning and public works departments consider the busway in all of their infrastructure projects. Our large employers are looking forward to the commute improvements that the busway will bring for their employees.

Just yesterday, three federal agencies – the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – met with a roomful of stakeholders to talk about how we can make Hartford a greener capital city. The busway was a key part of that discussion.

After 10 long years of planning, it may be time to question the state's ability to move a project forward in a timely fashion, but it is not time to question the validity of the busway project. It is the right kind of improvement for a City of our size. It will improve the bus ride for many current CTTRANSIT riders, and it will attract many new riders. It will also improve conditions on Interstate 84 west of downtown Hartford. In fact, the busway was originally recommended in a study of congestion on Interstate 84.

I respectfully request that you oppose proposed Bill 800.

Court of Common Council

CITY OF HARTFORD
550 MAIN STREET
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06103



Jo Winch, Council President
James M. Boucher, Majority Leader
Luis E. Cotto, Minority Leader

Alexander Aponte, Councilman
Corey J. Brinson, Councilman
Larry Deutsch, Councilman
Kenneth H. Kennedy Jr., Councilman
Robert L. Painter, Councilman
Calixto Torres, Councilman

John V. Bazzano, Town and City Clerk

February 14, 2011

This is to certify that at a meeting of the Court of Common Council, February 14, 2011, the following RESOLUTION was passed.

Whereas, The Connecticut Department of Transportation completed a Major Investment Study (MIS) of the Interstate 84 corridor west of downtown Hartford in 1998; and

Whereas, The MIS recommended that a Busway, known as the New Britain Hartford Busway, be built in the Amtrak corridor from Hartford to Newington Junction and in the New Britain secondary abandoned rail corridor from Newington Junction to New Britain; and

Whereas, The Busway was found to be the most cost effective improvement evaluated in terms of capital cost, operations subsidy, and ridership and is expected to alleviate increases in congestion on I-84 west of downtown Hartford more effectively than adding a lane to the freeway or building commuter rail or light rail linking New Britain and Hartford; and

Whereas, The Busway will provide fast and reliable bus service between downtown Hartford and the City's southwest neighborhoods, West Hartford, Newington, New Britain, Cheshire, Meriden, Bristol, and Waterbury; and

Whereas, Businesses in the Busway corridor will benefit from the increased transit options for employees and customers; and

Whereas, The Busway will lead to reduced parking requirements and reduced air pollution in the City of Hartford; and

Whereas, The Connecticut Department of Transportation has been proceeding with Busway design and working with the Federal Transit Administration to secure federal funding for Busway construction since 1999; and

Whereas, The Capitol Region Council of Governments has worked with Busway municipalities on station area planning to position them to capitalize on the opportunities for transit oriented development at Busway stations; and

Whereas, The City of Hartford has been involved in the planning process for the Busway during the development of the MIS, throughout the design process, and the station area planning process; and

Whereas, One City, One Plan recognizes the importance of the New Britain Hartford Busway in enhancing mobility in the City, and recommends its implementation; and

Whereas, The Busway supports several City redevelopment proposals, with the North Park redevelopment area, the Capitol West redevelopment area, and the Capitol Avenue redevelopment corridor all located within walking distance of busway stations; and

Whereas, The Parkville neighborhood has predicated all its local planning over the past 10 years on the presumption that a busway station will be built in Parkville; and

Whereas, The City continues to work with the Connecticut Department of Transportation with respect to station design issues and the alleviation of localized traffic issues with the closure of Flower Street and the intersection of the Busway with Flatbush Avenue necessitated by the Busway implementation; and

Whereas, The Federal Transit Administration is very near to making a final funding determination for the Busway; and

Whereas, Dedicated public transportation corridors traditionally spawn a significant nodal residential and retail transit oriented development along the corridor, and

Whereas, Construction of the Busway will create jobs for Hartford residents and Hartford businesses with training programs designed to funnel local labor to the contractors on the project; now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Court of Common Council expresses its support for the New Britain Busway and be it further

Resolved, That the Court of Common Council asks the Mayor and City staff to work with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to fully resolve the outstanding station design issues; and be it further

Resolved, That the Court of Common Council asks the Mayor and City Staff to request the Connecticut Department of Transportation fund a thorough traffic evaluation of downtown Hartford, reporting upon the impacts of and possible solutions to the closure of Flower Street and the addition of 30 buses during the peak hour to downtown streets; and be it further

Resolved, That the Court of Common Council asks the Mayor to report back to the Court of Common Council on the items stated in this resolution within 30 days.

Attest:


John V. Bazzano
City Clerk



PEDRO E. SEGARRA
MAYOR

11 February 2011

Honorable Daniel P. Malloy
Connecticut State Capitol
210 Capital Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Malloy,

As the mayor of City of Hartford I would like to express my strong support and the support of the City of Hartford for the New Britain-Hartford Busway project. This Project has been through many years of planning and design to insure that it is a wise use of public dollars. While further project coordination will be required, it is now ready to move forward to the construction phase.

This Busway will have a positive impact on the City in many different ways. During construction it is expected to create 4,700 to 6,100 person year jobs. Already a workshop has been held in the City to encourage local disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) to capture some of the construction work. In fact, the Federal Transit Administration is lending its considerable influence to insure that DBEs learn about the project and have opportunities to bid for Busway related work. In addition, DOT has committed to utilize local labor, with training programs to funnel local labor to the contractors on the project.

In developing, design and now carrying out this work, we have had a very positive working relationship, with DOT particularly under the leadership of Jeff Parker to pragmatically work through a variety concerns. Working with DOT we have developed and mutually agreed to a means of addressing two long standing concerns, the impact and maintenance operations of the Flatbush Avenue overpass and the traffic impact on the City and its major employers in the Broad and Asylum intersection area near Union Station. I am comfortable that the approach and commitments being made will result in viable solutions to long standing concerns, and should not deter this project moving forward as quickly as possible. In addition, during the construction planning and management phase, we ask that the State be mindful of our joint investment in the Parkville Municipal Development Area, and to the needs of the Hartford Housing Authority's (HHA) Charter Oak Market Place shopping center. The Charter Oak Market Place is one of the most successful shopping centers in Hartford. As the project proceeds I ask that attention be paid to four additional items; 1) the visibility of the Market Place after construction, 2) the impact on customer access during construction; 3) traffic, especially truck traffic, routing in the area during construction and 4) transit access to the HHA itself for tenants. We feel these matters are project coordination challenges that can and will be resolved during the next phase of the project. We only ask that the State be as attentive and supportive of these needs as the State has been in addressing other community concerns.

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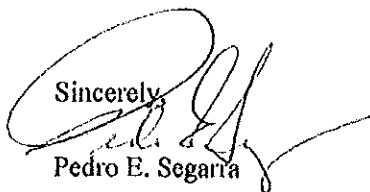
Once built, the Busway will be the region's first rapid transit line. It will provide fast and reliable bus service between downtown Hartford and the City's southwest neighborhoods, West Hartford, Newington and New Britain. Those who currently rely on transit in this corridor will experience a much improved trip, encouraging others to switch to bus transit, saving them time, money and fuel thereby reducing the region's green house gas emissions. Business along the corridor will benefit from increase transit options for employees and customers.

The Busway is an integral part of the transit vision in the City's One City One Plan blueprint for the future, while supporting several redevelopment projects including the Parkville Municipal Development Area, the Capital West Redevelopment Area, and the Capital Avenue Corridor itself. Each of these target areas are within walking distance of Busway stations. The Busway investment will make the station areas more competitive economically and we intend to capitalize upon the improved accessibility provided by the Busway as these projects move forward.

Finally, the Busway is part of the City and region's vision for an improved transportation system serving the capital city. The vision for this integrated system includes the Busway, the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield high speed rail project, the rebuilt I84 viaduct and at the pedestrian levels the iQuilt vision for the downtown. These projects, in combination, will transform the region's core and provide enormous economic impact.

I look forward to an ongoing collaboration with you, your staff and the State of Connecticut on this important project.

Sincerely,



Pedro E. Segarra
Mayor, City of Hartford

cc: Jeffrey Parker
David B. Panagore